

Mr. Chairman, supporters of school vouchers say that vouchers provide an opportunity to save 2,000 of the District's poor students. But, I ask, "What will happen to the District's other 76,000 students?" Supporters also believe that vouchers will be a shot in the arm for the D.C. Public School System, creating competition that will force them to improve the quality of education offered by the D.C. public schools. I do not believe that will be the case. The school voucher plan in this bill reaches a limited number of students seeking to opt out of the D.C. Public School System. In fact, it is not powerful enough to impact the school system in the way school voucher supporters would like to believe.

Residents of the District of Columbia do not support school vouchers. In fact, 89 percent said so in a referendum on school vouchers. The parents in the District want to rebuild and reform their Public School System. We have no business imposing a voucher program on the District, against its will. Rather, we are morally obligated to ensure that all students in the District of Columbia—and across the Nation—have equal access to quality education. We must not abandon the D.C. public schools. Instead, we must strengthen our commitment to improving them.

Mr. Chairman, I strongly support—and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting—the Moran substitute to H.R. 2607. This substitute is clean and replaces the House provisions with the Senate bill—as reported by the Appropriations Committee. This version has no veto threats and does not include any controversial riders or funding for school vouchers. It also has bipartisan support. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on the Moran substitute.

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

### HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 23, 1997

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, another day has gone by and still no campaign finance reform. As we approach the end of one more week we are inching closer and closer to the end of the 1997 legislative session. If we do not take action before we adjourn, now expected to be November 7, we will not have the chance to fix the campaign finance system before the 1998 election. Next year will be an election year and any chance to change the system during a campaign year is very unlikely.

Today we spent over an hour debating a contested election for Congress. That debate is important, and must take place. However, if this House can find the time to consider the outcome of one election, why can't we take the time to consider legislation that will impact every Congressional election from this day forward. The answer is clear. The leadership of this House has no desire to consider campaign finance reform.

The sad fact is, because of the reluctance of the House leadership to allow a vote, Members are going to be forced to take action on their own. That will happen tomorrow.

Before that happens, I hope the Speaker will reconsider his opposition to allowing a vote on campaign finance reform. I hope the Speaker will give the majority of the public

what they want. They want Congress to get serious about cleaning up our house by passing campaign finance reform.

#### TRIBUTE TO MID BRONX DESPERADOES

### HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 23, 1997

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mid Bronx Desperadoes for 22 years of service to our Bronx community.

Mr. Speaker, the Mid Bronx Desperadoes [MBD] was founded in 1974 as a group of volunteers who understood the need to revitalize the Crotona Park East section of Bronx Community District 3 that was devastated by arson, disinvestment, abandonment, and population loss.

First in cooperation with the local police and fire departments, and later with government officials and Community Board 3, the volunteer coalition was able to establish Mid Bronx Desperadoes Community Housing Corporation [MBDCHC] which created over 2,100 housing units with development costs of approximately \$213.5 million within Community District 3. MBD has also helped residents of the South Bronx become homeowners, serving as community sponsor, marketing and sales agents for 328 new homes, including the widely acclaimed Charlotte Street development of 89 single family homes. MBDCHC is a part of the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program [CCRP].

Throughout its 22 years of service, MBD has been a model of excellence in providing our community with exemplary services through housing development and property management, economic development, and delivery of human services.

With the collaboration of a qualified staff, MBD has expanded its network to include additional services in conjunction with other local organizations and medical centers. Among these are: affordable housing development, marketing and management, Mid Bronx Community Development Federal Credit Union, Family Practice Health Center, Head Start Day Care, Community Crime Prevention, Comprehensive Case Management, Job Training and Placement, and Community Organizing.

The achievements of the Mid Bronx Desperadoes are measured by the people they have served. Thousands of Bronx residents have been employed and benefited from the center's education and training programs. And hundreds of thousands of people, from children to senior citizens, have received quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to honor the family and friends of the Mid Bronx Desperadoes. I ask my colleagues to join in celebrating this milestone and acknowledge this outstanding agency for 22 years of accomplishment and service for the South Bronx community.

#### SENSE-OF-CONGRESS RESOLUTION

### HON. ASA HUTCHINSON

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 24, 1997

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, for more than 200 years, our Nation has prospered as a democracy because we have enjoyed certain freedoms, including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, and freedom of religion. And, as other nations have moved away from more restrictive forms of government toward democracy, those that have made successful transitions have guaranteed their citizens the same.

Mr. Speaker, although the emerging democracy of Russia has made significant strides since the fall of the Soviet Union, it appears that she has taken a step backward in recent days. On September 25, 1997, President Yeltsin signed into law the On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association Act. This measure, which he vetoed once before, denies legal status to all religious groups except those which were officially registered with the Soviet Government at least 15 years ago. Such denial of legal status would automatically strip a number of religious minorities of fundamental rights, such as the right to rent or own property, employ religious workers, produce or possess religious literature, maintain bank accounts, or conduct organized charitable or educational activities.

This new law violates not only the Russian Constitution but also the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1989 Concluding Document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. On a more basic level, the intent of the law runs contrary to the very principles that form the foundations of a democratic society. For, if the Russian Federation Government sees fit to discriminate against individuals and organizations according to their religious beliefs, what will prevent those in power from discriminating against those with different political or philosophic affiliations? What is to prevent government officials in outlying provinces, who have historically been oppressors of those of differing political or religious affiliation, from cracking down on religious and political minorities? What recourse is open to an individual who has been denied basic civil rights or who has been substantively injured by a local government official if the government of the nation essentially condones oppressive action?

These questions have already proven to be valid. The new law clearly states that religious organizations have until the end of 1999 to register with the Russian Federation under the new law. And officials from Russia's Ministry of Justice have assured religious organizations and officials in the United States that implementation of this new law will not result in discrimination or oppression of religious organizations in that nation. However, cases have already been reported of churches that have been prohibited from meeting in rented or public facilities as a direct result of this law. This leads me to question how effective the Federation will be in ensuring that the rights and freedoms of religious minorities are protected.

As such, I feel it necessary that we express our concern over the enactment of this law to the Russian Federation, and that we encourage the Federation to embrace all of the